

STATE DEPT. AND CIA SPLIT ON ENVOY ROLE

Interpret Embassies Control Over Covert Operations Differently

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 2 — An order by President Carter giving United States ambassadors around the world authority to supervise "all United States Government officers and employees in their countries" has produced widely divergent interpretations by the Central Intelligence Agency and the State Department.

The State Department issued a guideline simply amplifying Mr. Carter's directive, according to high-ranking Administrative officials. But the intelligence agency guidelines noted "special exceptions" to what an ambassador might oversee, according to one official.

These exceptions included prohibitions on communicating details of covert operations and of administrative procedures undertaken by C.I.A. station chiefs.

Officials of the State Department and the intelligence agency confirmed the disparity between the Carter decree issued in a letter last autumn and the guidelines subsequently issued by the agency to its station chiefs in foreign posts.

The Carter letter, published two months ago in the State Department Newsletter, was described then by the department as going "beyond similar communications" in 1961 by President Kennedy and in 1969 by President Nixon in affirming the "primacy" of ambassadors over all American personnel in their countries.

The issue arose after the abortive 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, sponsored by the C.I.A., when President Kennedy determined that one of the shortcomings of United States diplomacy was that numerous official American activities abroad were undertaken without central coordination and were sometimes contradictory.

The Carter letter, dated Oct. 25, stated that United States ambassadors "have the authority to review message traffic to and from all personnel under your jurisdiction" — presumably including C.I.A. officers.

Several days later, both Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance and Adm. Stansfield Turner, Director of Central Intelligence,

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sent out guidelines interpreting the Presidential letter, as Mr. Carter had indicated they would.

But the two sets of guidelines differed and, according to high-ranking Administration officials, the C.I.A. directive tightened restrictions on what agency messages an ambassador might see.

The Vance guideline, those officials said, simply amplified the President's letter, saying that United States ambassadors had the right to require all American Government personnel in their countries to keep the ambassadors "thoroughly and currently informed about all their activities."

The Turner guideline, described by one official as "tightly written and full of caveats," declared, however that there were "special exceptions" to what an ambassador might oversee. These exceptions included prohibitions on communicating details of covert operations and of administrative procedures undertaken by C.I.A. station chiefs.

Station chiefs are the agency's overseas clandestine operations supervisors, usually working under diplomatic or military cover in American embassies. They are the agency's equivalent of ambassadors.

A White House spokesman said that President Carter would have no comment on the divergent interpretations.

A State Department official, interpreting the Turner guidelines, said, "In effect they stated that the President's letter and the State Department guidelines do not apply to the C.I.A."

The official said that ambassadors had been free to oversee C.I.A. cover operations under the guidelines that applied before the Carter letter went out.

Affirming this interpretation, a C.I.A. official cited an example from the ambassadorship of Frank C. Carlucci, who is terminating a three-year assignment in Portugal to accept the post of deputy director of the intelligence agency.

The official remarked that after an attempted pro-Communist coup in Lisbon in November 1975, Ambassador Carlucci, acting under then applicable guidelines, was able to insist on being informed of covert C.I.A. activities in Portugal.

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On learning that the agency station chief was maintaining a covert relationship with several members of the pre-1974 Portuguese Government, the official continued, Mr. Carlucci demanded that the connections be terminated.

The official said that the C.I.A. had decided to let the covert relationships "expire" because it was "not worth the squabble" to have Ambassador Carlucci deciding who should or should not be included among the agency's clandestine "assets" in Portugal.

The C.I.A. official and a knowledgeable State Department official agreed that under the new guidelines such a controversy would probably not arise because the C.I.A. station chief would probably not feel obliged to identify all of his covert relationships by name.

Under the Turner directive, the agency official went on, an ambassador would be made aware of covert operations but would not be involved in them.

Both the Vance and Turner guidelines are classified as secret documents, the officials said. Nominally they are supposed together to constitute a State Department-C.I.A. agreement struck between the agency director and the Secretary of State.

Admiral Turner and Secretary Vance sent identical guidelines respectively to station chiefs and ambassadors. However, it appears that the C.I.A. sent an additional directive to the station chiefs undercutting the jointly agreed text.

As in the past, the current guidelines say that disputes between an ambassador and a station chief are to be referred to Washington for resolution between the Secretary of State and the C.I.A. Director.

It could not be learned whether the new guidelines had created such disputes, although there are indications that several ambassadors have indicated unhappiness with the new arrangement.

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